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Casey and the CIA

By JOHN P. ROCHE

William Casey, President Reagan's director of Central Intelligence, is an extremely talented professional with a track record that includes OSS work in World War II, top-echelon status in the State Department, and directorship of the Export-Import Bank. He is going to need all his smarts to cope with the sad-sack operation we call the "intelligence community."

Once labeled a "rogue elephant" the CIA now resembles a fearful cocker spaniel.



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To say this is not to call for a purge — morale at Langley is bad enough already and most of the staff are competent. The basic problem is that the CIA must revert to the professionalism that characterized its early years, and not become a shill for the views of the president.

I SPEAK HERE with some bitterness. During the period 1966-68 when I was convinced, like the Hanoi leadership, that we were going to lose the war in the United States, not in Vietnam, there was a special CIA unit charged with stroking President Johnson. Every time I would send LBJ a memo opposing the Americanization of the war and urging what later became "Vietnamization," some spook would turn up with captured secret documents proving Ho Chi Minh was looking for a white flag.

This process of manicuring and suppressing information became far worse once President Nixon and Prince Henry the Navigator decided the Cold War, or "era of confrontation," was over and now the lion and

the lamb could share a double bed with no risks. Then came President Ford, still with Henry as the "Great Helmsman," clinking glasses at Helsinki and initialing some gnomonic document at Vladivostok.

The Nixon and Ford administrations, thus, put themselves in psychological hock to the Soviets. If Moscow violated the 1972 agreement to work jointly for peace in the world by urging in its Arabic radio broadcasts the elimination of Israel in the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Mr. Nixon and Kissinger, in effect, said "boys will be boys."

If the Soviet military played fast and loose with the SALT I agreement, it was obvious we had to move to SALT II. This was equivalent to urging that if you lose a small pot with a marked deck, the answer is to raise the ante.

To be specific, I have reliable information from foreign sources that the USSR has on numerous occasions violated the 150-kiloton threshold for underground nuclear tests. A few times these have hit the press, notably when they overdid one a bit last year and reached about 275 kilotons, but the United States has ducked formal protests.

Maybe someone stuck a plain, brown envelope in Ambassador Dobrynin's mailbox at midnight, but to make a public fuss would be to announce we had been taken. Similarly, under SALT arrangements, no ICBM is to be equipped with more than 10 MIRVs (multiple independent-re-entry vehicles), but reliable sources suggest the Soviet giant SS-18 had been tested with more than 20.

One more item of technical intelligence: Suddenly, on Jan. 9, we learned from the press that the Soviets have launched a giant sub, the

"Oscar," equipped with cruise missiles. It is twice the size of our biggest attack sub and is designed to make life extremely difficult for our carriers.

Speaking of carriers, there was also a small item that the 45,000-ton Soviet carrier Kiev, now in the Mediterranean, appears to be returning to its base in the Black Sea. Under the Montreux Convention, which governs passage through the Dardanelles, carriers are banned, but our Turkish allies have baptized the Kiev, and other carriers in its class, "cruisers" and let them through.

All the items so far reported were known to the intelligence community, but for political reasons the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations put them in the deep freeze. The director of Central Intelligence can hardly hold a weekly "leak session" with the press to discuss the administration's behavior, but he should be prepared to tell his boss, the president, that if this practice doesn't stop, he will resign. We get enough disinformation from the USSR. Keep the CIA out of that industry.

ON A DIFFERENT level, Casey must move to upgrade our "humint" assets, that is, human as distinct from electronic. It is hardly a state secret that the Iranian fire storm caught us by surprise, although *Mosad*, the Israeli CIA, had warned us and Iranian Jews, in 1978, that the roof was coming down. A lot of Iranian Jews got out a couple of years before we held our recent hostage festivities.

All in all, a major assignment, but Casey should be up to it. He should be the first top figure at CIA since Walter Bedell Smith capable of telling the president he's out of his tree.